

## Christian Art in China.

By BERTHOLD LAUFER.

When, in the course of the sixteenth century, the East-Asiatic world gradually came into contact with European commerce, works of European art also found their way into the East. Woodcuts and copper engravings of European origin were colored in India, and embodied in albums of Indian miniatures<sup>1</sup> side by side with native productions. Not least was it the policy of the Jesuit missionaries to impress the minds of the people by means of artistic decoration of the churches, especially with paintings. This was the case when Christianity was introduced into Japan, where Xavier had already brought a picture of the Madonna. In 1562 five churches are mentioned as being adorned with paintings, most of which were ordered from Portugal in that period.<sup>2</sup>

The appearance of European art works in China, and the beginning of their influence on Chinese art, date from the end of the sixteenth century, during the close of the Ming dynasty, and may be generally and well marked by the year 1583, the date of the arrival in China of the great Jesuit Matteo Ricci.

At that early date, specimens of foreign art were not only imported into China, as we shall see, but were also copied by Chinese painters. A good example of this kind is presented by a folding-album<sup>3</sup> containing six paintings on silk, all mere copies of European productions. The last of these paintings is signed, in the lower right-hand corner, *Hsüan-Tsai pi-shu* ("brush-work of Hsüan-Tsai"), which is one of the designations of the painter Tung K'i-ch'ang (1555-1636).<sup>4</sup> A red seal is attached to the signature, but it is now nearly faded out and illegible. The album was acquired by me at Hsi-an fu, Shensi Province.

As regards the identification of the subjects represented in these pictures, I must state at the outset that I am not a specialist in the history of

<sup>1</sup> F. Sarre, in *Jahrbuch der Königl. Preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, 1904, vol. XXV, No. 3, p. 157.

<sup>2</sup> H. Haas, *Geschichte des Christentums in Japan*, Tokyo, 1904, vol. II, pp. 319, 320.

<sup>3</sup> Size 37.1 cm. by 27.5 cm.

<sup>4</sup> F. Hirth, *Scraps from a Collector's Notebook*, T'oung Pao, 1905, p. 383. He must have been an artist of great productivity; many of his works being enumerated in the *Wan shou shêng tien*, chaps. 55, 57, 58, 59.

European art, and that my explanations are mere preliminary suggestions, which should be rectified by experts.

The first painting (plate I) represents a man (perhaps one of the apostles) sitting on a stone bench overshadowed by a tree, holding an unfolded book in his left hand, and a goose-quill in his right. His upper-garment is dark-blue, and held by a narrow red girdle; his neckcloth is of a light-reddish color; his under-garment violet. His long hair hangs down over neck and forehead. A small boy in red clothing stands behind the bench, and is touching the edge of the book with his left hand. Plates I and II.

The second (plate II) shows the figure of a Dutch general, apparently, clad in a coat-of-mail, and wearing a wig with long-flowing curls covering the ears. He holds in his right hand what may be the handle of a spear or a flag-staff, while at his left side the hilt of a sword of Chinese type is visible. He is accompanied by two soldiers who wear curious pointed caps (the one blue, the other violet). Of the one man, only the head, sword-blade, and feet are represented. The other carries a round Chinese shield of rattan in his left hand and a drawn Chinese sword in his right; but his blue trousers, red gaiters, and high top-boots allow of no doubt as to his *Landsknecht* origin. In the left upper corner, part of a flag is represented.

Professor HIRTH<sup>1</sup> has figured, from a series of Chinese woodcuts published in 1743, the portrait of the hero Ti-Ts'ing, in which he has pointed out the effect of European influence in the representation of hair-dressing with long wigs. The same illustration is reproduced also by JAMES W. DAVIDSON<sup>2</sup> with the designation "Koxinga (from a Chinese scroll)." It is matter for regret that the author reveals neither the source from which he derived his picture nor the authority for this identification; but nevertheless it is quite credible that, according to some more recent traditions, it goes also under the name of "Koxinga." The expectation of Professor Hirth,<sup>3</sup> that some fortunate chance might throw into our hands the *Urmodell* to this un-Chinese head of Ti-Ts'ing, is now fulfilled by the present picture painted by Hsüan-Tsai. The type of the Dutchman with long hair and flowing locks figures largely in Chinese and Japanese art of the seventeenth

<sup>1</sup> Über fremde Einflüsse in der chinesischen Kunst, München und Leipzig, 1896, p. 63. F. FEUILLET DE CONCHES, in his excellent paper Les peintres européens en Chine et les peintres chinois (Revue contemporaine, vol. XXV, 1856, p. 39), has already alluded to this cut with the words: "On trouve jusqu'à un guerrier illustre, un demi-dieu du temps des Soung (nommé Ti-tsing), lequel, vu seulement à mi-corps, offre, chose curieuse, tout l'aspect d'un seigneur de la cour de Louis XIV, avec la grande perruque et le rabat." The same portrait will be found also in the *Kieh-tse yüan hua ch'uan*, book IV, p. 29; as this work was published in 1679 (WYLIE, Notes on Chinese Literature, 2d ed., p. 155), we can but presume that the picture in the collection of 1743 was simply copied from this book.

<sup>2</sup> The Island of Formosa, Past and Present, London and New York, 1903, plate opposite p. 54.

<sup>3</sup> L. c., p. 62, note 1.

and eighteenth centuries.<sup>1</sup> In Japan I saw several water-colors of that colonial period, representing well-portrayed Dutchmen in intimate Japanese surroundings. A. FORKE<sup>2</sup> describes two figures of Europeans noticed by him on a *P'ai-lou* near P'ing-yao hsien, Shansi Province; each man is leading a lion by a halter. From their features, their full whiskers and mustaches, boots, jacket, large slouch-hat, and mantilla, one may well recognize in them at first glance, according to him, Europeans of the seventeenth century, either Dutch or Spaniards.

Cut: In this connection, I may be allowed to reproduce here (fig. 1), for Fig. 1. the curiosity of it, a chinesized portrait of the Great Elector of Brandenburg. This was first published in the "Berliner Kalender, herausgegeben vom Verein für die Geschichte Berlins, 1903," merely with the explanation printed below the cut, "wood-engraving from the year 1685, destined for the projected enterprises of the Great Elector in China." I understand that the original is preserved in the Print Cabinet of the Royal Museum of Berlin, but no information could be obtained from that quarter regarding the details of the history of this picture. This originated, of course, in Prussia, and not in China; and it seems to me that the Chinese writings along the four edges have been composed by Christian Mentzel, a would-be sinologue of that time. The Chinese characters reproduced in facsimile in his book "Chronologia" (1696)<sup>3</sup> are of exactly the same style, and have the same stiff appearance, as those on the engraving. On the lower margin we read in Chinese the year "1685 *T'ien chu*," whereby he apparently meant to express "the year of our Lord," the position of the words being certainly wrong. Along the left margin the date is given "45th year of Brandenburg (*Pi-lang-téh-ko-érh-jih*)." The inscription on the top seems to be intended to mean "Portrait of the Great Elector, the Warrior (?);" on the right, "The highly intelligent Elector P'ing-ssü [perhaps for Frederick William; p'ing = peace = Fried-rich], the Warrior, the holy Emperor." Whether a copy of this portrait ever arrived in China, I am unable to say; but what the Chinese could have made out of this jargon, it is hard to see, and what effect it was to have produced upon them is still more difficult to understand. Perhaps it was an effort similar to that made some nine years ago by the Czar Nicholas II, or his advisers, when he had a book published in Tibetan, Mongolian, and Russian, enumerating all his pious acts and qualities in the interest of Russian propaganda in Central Asia,—a book which is said to have been greatly appreciated by the Tibetans for some time.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> GULLAND, *Chinese Porcelain*, p. 238, fig. 412; *Catalogue of the Morgan Collection of Chinese Porcelains*, New York, 1904, plate XX and p. 65; A. BROCKHAUS, *Netsuke, Versuch einer Geschichte der japanischen Schnitzkunst*, Leipzig, 1905, pp. 399, 400.

<sup>2</sup> *Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen*, Berlin, 1898, vol. I, 1, p. 47.

<sup>3</sup> See the long title in H. CORDIER's *Bibliotheca sinica*, vol. I, 2d ed., col. 560.

<sup>4</sup> Also China is the land of unlimited possibilities. Mr. W. W. ROCKHILL (*The Century Magazine*, vol. XLI, 1890-91, p. 253) tells us the following: "I once

The third painting of Hsüan-Tsai (plate III) represents what I presume to be Christ and the two disciples of Emmaus (Luke XXIV, 13-35).<sup>1</sup> Christ wears a red garment, with a green pallium hanging in folds over his left shoulder; he is barefooted; his long flowing hair ends in curls; he is raising his right hand as if about to speak; the fingers of both hands are stretched out. The man at his left has on a bluish coat with a violet cape, a yellow turban, and blue shoes. The man at his right wears a blue coat, a brown mantle thrown over it in folds, red shoes, and likewise a turban. Plate III.

The fourth painting (plate IV) may be John the Baptist in prison (?); the vault of the background being suggestive, perhaps, of a dungeon. The snake wound in a ring which he holds between his hands is not, as far as I know, a symbol usually found with him,<sup>2</sup> and the subject may therefore be better explained as an allegory of wisdom. He is sitting on a bench with legs crossed (the left foot is destroyed in the picture), with long hair, green coat, violet mantle, a skin over his lap, and the top of his feet wrapped with green cloth. Plate IV.

The fifth in the series (plate V) represents doubtless the apostle Luke. He is sitting on the back of an ox under a willow-tree, writing in an unfolded book. He wears a long blue coat, the white edge of his shirt being visible over the breast; and a flowing rose-colored tunic hangs gracefully over his right shoulder. The hair and beard are white, and the cap rose-colored. A piece of red cloth is spread over the back of the animal. Plate V.

The last picture (plate VI), somewhat larger than the others (37 cm. by 30.1 cm.), seems to represent a group of allegorical figures arranged on a balcony, and symbolizing art and science. The woman on the right—in red garment with blue shawl, and green ribbon fluttering in her hair—is holding up a globe in her left hand, while an unrolled map hangs downward from her right hand. The female figure next to her—in green dress with red girdle, and rose-colored shawl around head and shoulders—is drawing a circle on a square wooden board with a pair of compasses. A man is Plate VI.

---

came across a Chinese book entitled 'The Fifty Manifestations of Kuan-yin.' One picture showed her likeness as she appeared to an old man in Shansi, another the form under which she had shown herself to a devout priest, and in one she had appeared to a poor laborer as Peter the Great of Russia, for there was the picture of the great emperor in breastplate and wig and with a marshal's baton in his hand." In a Buddhist temple of China, a statue of Napoleon I has been seen, with incense burning in front of it; in another, an image with European traits and costume, very similar to the portrait of Father Verbiest, has been observed; the Chinese watch-makers honor Father Ricci as their patron, and keep in their shops his image or tablet with the usual incense-sticks and red candles (P. LOUIS GAILLARD, *Croix et Swastika en Chine*, Shanghai, 1893, p. 182).

<sup>1</sup> See F. W. FARRAR, *The Life of Christ as represented in Art*, New York, 1894, p. 357.

<sup>2</sup> The snake appears as an attribute of John the Evangelist, but it is always coiling around a chalice.



































